

mototorq

your online motorcycle magazine

BIKE REVIEW BMW K1200 GT

The Knight in Shining Armour



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Sticky Rubber
– Metzeler's M3.
- 2 Pimp my ride.
- 3 MotoGP Fever
– camping at the
Island!

The Knight in Shining Armour

Its looks are reminiscent of a K1200S, but on steroids, and when you first sit astride it you feel somewhat like Captain Kirk on the Starship Enterprise. But press the ignition and you know you're not riding the mothership!

Taking off in city traffic I expected to have some initial trouble manoeuvring but the bike was surprisingly light, feeling more like a sportsbike than a grand tourer. The Hossack-style front suspension (Duolever in BMW-speak) absorbs the bumps in the rough city streets and even under heavy braking the bike stays level — not diving as you are used to.

It was good to have the chance to get a feel for the bike before the big trip – especially to see the differences in handling riding one-up and then riding full-loaded with pillion and gear (lots of gear).

Gran Turisimo

While the K1200GT has a sporting heritage, being based on the K1200S, it is designed for long distance touring. It has the same 4 cylinder engine but has been detuned from 123kW to 112kW with more low to mid range torque. If you have the previous GT, it's like comparing apples and oranges

– but this is 17% more powerful and has 11% more torque. It's also lighter (249kg dry weight), can carry more (19% more payload), and has a 17% greater cruising range.

Ergonomic and marital challenges

What better opportunity to test BMW's new tourer than a 2500km round trip to Phillip Island for the MotoGP! Travelling 800km in one day and 400 the next, I wanted to make sure we arrived in good shape (my ongoing relationship with the pillion depended on it). You might say an 800km stint isn't too arduous, besides, surely the pillion will be relaxing in the comfort of a fine hotel,

perhaps exercising your credit card at Cowes (or along Bridge Road in Melbourne), while you "work hard" at the MotoGP? NOT ON YOUR LIFE! Perhaps I didn't make it clear – we are CAMPING trackside!!

That said, I was quietly worried that (a) I couldn't fit what normally goes in a large 4 wheel drive onto a BMW K1200GT, and (b) even if I could, I wouldn't be able to ride said BMW! Let me just say now that we are not campers, my wife will not travel anywhere without her kit (large bag), and she is like the "princess and



the pea" when it comes to beds. Imagine the joy on her face when she found you could buy 12 volt hairdryers!

Buttons and levers

However, all that comes later. First up, make sure the rider is comfortable. While I'm relatively tall (183cm), I'm shortish in the leg so I like a low seat. The seat is easy to adjust with a lever arrangement instead of the usual fiddly slots that are often impossible to fit the seat into. When I picked the bike up, the handlebars were at their highest which made me feel less in



control and more like I was sitting on a cruiser. Moving through 4 levels, I set them down 40mm to their lowest position using the special tool (conveniently clipped under the seat). However, after an hour in this position the ergonomically-designed seat became uncomfortable.

Being able to adjust the footpegs might have helped as my knees were now too high, but there didn't appear to be a facility to do this. I guess it's my fault for not fitting the German ideal body shape; but at the end of the day, if you're paying over \$30,000 for a luxury motorbike it would be worth it to spend a few hundred more for a customised seat tailored to suit. The seat did come into its own late one night in Cowes when temperatures dropped to zero – press a button, et voila "hot buns"! Very happy campers!

Excellent Tech

Technology is where the Germans excel – the optional Electronic Suspension Adjustment made suspension setting a breeze. I set it for two up in normal mode (comfort was too bouncy and sport too hard when loaded). But the piece de resistance is the electronic windshield – hours of fun pressing the button and watching it go up and down. Great protection from rain at night with increased visibility, and minor adjustments direct air with least resistance to the rider and allow you to minimise helmet noise. The screen also stays put when you shut down (unlike some others on the market).

Apart from a sore butt (the pillion also had a problem with the seat shape, although she liked the sitting position which enabled her to see in the mirrors as well as have a good view of the road ahead), we arrived at Lakes Entrance the first night in surprisingly good shape



All tucked in and cosy behind the fairing and screen. Very effective without looking too bulky.



BMW's duolever smooths out the bumps – for a detailed explanation of how it works go to: www.motorq.com.au/k1200gt.



The flightdeck of the Starship Enterprise! The bike computer readouts (centre) are clear and informative.



Easy access to controls with push-button electronic suspension adjustment, screen adjustment and cruise control.



Right-hand controls include the bike computer button, heated hand-grip and heated seat controls.



thanks to the smooth suspension, easy handling and the protected riding position.

My only other concern was the position of the rear brake pedal – this wouldn't be a problem if you have size 12 feet, but with my size 8 ½'s I found my shins hit the protruding engine casing before I made contact with the brake!

Packhorse

After removing ¾ of what the pillion had in her pile, and with a bit of careful packing, the large panniers coped admirably. I particularly liked BMW's new system for opening and closing which allows push button operation without having to use the key. The panniers also had retractable cord stays which wouldn't jam when closing the pannier.

Unfortunately, we didn't have a tankbag or topcase, but the huge rear rack was ideal for holding:

- A double-sized, high-sided, velour topped airbed (the nifty self inflating mats I had purchased for the trip apparently weren't fit to sleep on, or even lay on the beach on for that matter!)
- A two-person tent (big enough if you're sleeping on self-inflating mats)
- Two sleeping bags
- Two fold-up stools, plus
- Two rainsuits and my clear visor!
- All of which was held onto the rack by a pair of Andy Strapz piggy-back straps – nothing moved the whole trip!

Lastly, the handy lockable glovebox held my ipod, wallet, sunglasses etc.

The Ride

I can't believe it – we actually managed to be on the road at 6am! I was anxious to avoid the Sydney traffic as I didn't fancy handling a heavily-loaded touring bike in rush-hour traffic. However, I needn't have worried as the big K didn't seem to notice the load and handled remarkably well. My only complaint was that gear changes were greeted with a big "clunk" – I sometimes managed to change smoothly but it seemed to be by luck rather than technique. I tried adjusting the clutch but this didn't make things any easier. However, this problem was mainly of concern in traffic and at low revs – open her up and all is forgiven!

Clearing the city quickly on the new M7 we hit the Hume highway heading for Goulburn. The freeway section gave me a chance to experiment with windscreen heights, cruise control, and the nifty Bike Computer. Pressing a button at the right end of the handlebar enables you to call up all kinds of information. For example, the range remaining on the fuel in the tank, average speed, average fuel consumption, and ambient temperature. The computer will warn you automatically when you're running low on



Colour-coded panniers have lots of room and a new latch system.



Watch your shins on the engine casing when changing gear (unless you have size 12s!).



Pillion also has control of heated-seat operation as well as a comfy perch.



fuel (around 80km before empty); or if the oil level drops too low; or if there is a risk of ice (below 3 degrees). It also shows whether your heated grips or heated seats are on.

Watching average fuel consumption figures was interesting – the GT is quite frugal at normal cruising speeds but make it work **very** hard and you notice a significant increase in consumption!

Refuelling at Goulburn we avoided the Federal Highway and took the road to Tarago and onto Queanbeyan. Little traffic and lots of bends! When you reach Tarago you can turn right as we did, or keep going to intersect with the Kings Highway ending in Bateman's Bay.

From Queanbeyan we took the Monaro to Cooma and started to meet quite a few bikes heading to the Island. For me (and the bike) the best part of the trip was Cooma to Caan River (twisty and fast) – this was where Norman Hossack's double trailing link front wheel suspension design really showed its value. Normally the combination of a heavily-loaded bike and rough roads would have made for some hairy riding, but the BMW Duolever's two trailing links absorb the forces resulting from the jounce/rebound and keep the bike stable. Go to www.mototorq.com.au/k1200gt for a more detailed explanation.

As dusk gathers we decide to continue onto Lakes Entrance and stop for the night (another good run). Being visually-challenged I find this time of the evening difficult, however the BM's Xenon headlight was so powerful I thought it would burn holes in the bike in front! The light output is twice that of a conventional halogen bulb and has a light spectrum similar to that of natural daylight.

After breakfasting in Bairnsdale the next morning we follow the Princes Highway only as far as Sale, then head out on the A440 – the coastal route to the Island. This was the stretch of road where I really noticed the difference in fuel consumption figures!

At the Island

By the time we reached the Island I thought I had the measure of the uber tourist – it was even quite happy on the slippery grass slopes of the trackside campground! But one thing I wasn't prepared for was everytime we stopped a crowd gathered around (yes the pillion is rather a handsome woman) but in this case they all wanted to ogle the bike!

There is something quite primordial about the BMW K1200GT! To understand you'll need to try it for yourself.



Getting closer after nearly 1200km and still feeling fresh!



QUICKFacts

BMW K1200 GT

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Capacity | 1157cc |
| Type | 2 cylinder 4-stroke, single cam, 4 valves per cylinder |
| Bore/stroke | 79mm x 59mm |
| Max Output | 112kW at 9500 rpm |
| Max Torque | 130Nm at 7750 rpm |
| Drive | Shaft drive |
| Suspension | BMW duolever (front) BMW paralever (rear) |
| Wheelbase | 2,318mm |
| Seat Height | 820/840mm |
| Dry Weight | 249kg |

Best at

- Highway cruising
- Long sweeping bends
- Handling while fully loaded
- Torque
- Suspension system smooths out the bumps
- Xenon headlight – wow!!

Niggles

- Seat shape
- Footpegs not adjustable
- Gearbox clunky
- Rear brake position



BMW's uber tourer draws an admiring crowd wherever it goes!



Sportec M3

Now it was time to look at the touring bike! While it's (BMW K1200 RS) a "sports-tourer" I found the handling to be more on the touring side. Having heard a lot about Metzeler's new M3 tyre – I wondered whether it would transform this bike as the Z6 tyres had the 250 (see Issue 1).



Sportec M3 – smooth as!

The first thing I noticed when the RS was fitted with its Sportec M3 shoes was how smoothly it went into corners. Before, I had to apply pressure and consciously attack a corner – with the M3s the bike seemed to understand when it was time to lean and my thoughts were enough to make it roll into a corner. A friend following behind me on a ride commented when we stopped, "Have you done something different to the bike?" he said, "you just seemed to flow through the corners."

Now I didn't know whether that was a comment on my less than perfect riding style, but I told him how much a difference the new tyres had made to the bike's handling.

Many of today's riders are looking for more sports performance from their tyres to exploit the real potential of their bike. But at the same time they want good mileage and performance throughout the life of a tyre.

This was the starting point for Metzeler's engineers, to produce a tyre setting new boundaries for sports riding and also for the occasional track day, but at the same moment assuring safety in wet conditions and great mileage with consistent performance throughout its whole life.

They started with a different compound between the front and rear tyre to maximise grip and feeling at every angle of lean. The success of this strategy was very apparent when I found my pegs scraping without thinking I was that far over in a corner.

The M3's profile goes with a new tread pattern designed to maximize dry grip as well as give confidence in wet conditions and reduce aquaplaning.

Metzeler's patented zero degree steel belt also makes the bike more stable, and reduces the tendency of the

bike to right itself even when braking into the corner. This certainly gave me the confidence to be much more aggressive in corners!

On the track

A day at Oran Park really proved the worth of the M3 tyres – fast, smooth performance and minimal man-handling of the bike! So, if you want a good all-round sports tyre try the Sportec M3 from Metzeler.

Summary

- Excellent dry grip & handling
- Confidence-boosting Wet performance
- Good mileage.

ANTICIPATION!

The road is calling.
Corners await.

But don't let the anticipation end when you wind on the throttle.

At a Stay Upright Course we'll teach you to anticipate the unexpected and help you build a systematic and safer approach to your riding.

Call 1300 366 640 or visit
www.stayupright.com.au.



motogp fever



BMW meets Mad Max!

It was somewhat incongruous arriving at Phillip Island and checking into the Trackside Campground riding BMW's new uber tourer, the K1200GT. It seemed more fitting to be checking into a five-star hotel to match the five-star machine.

Instead, we arrived to a scene that could have been a set from a *Mad Max* movie! Imagine the world after a nuclear explosion – civilisation barely holding together, the smoke from campfires casting a haze over the skyline and all manner of tents providing shelter. Not to mention the rather fierce looking inhabitants.





Cranbourne welcomes bikers.



Classic Harley Davidson.



PocketGP at Cranbourne!

We managed to find a relatively sheltered spot to set up camp, right next to a section of the new kart track that mimicked the shape of the Phillip Island circuit. Erecting our small tent (originally meant only for me and my gear) was the work of a few moments; however the fun started when I unpacked the huge double airbed.

The BMW had a 12-volt connection, which saved a couple of hours of hand pumping – but a fully pumped airbed was unfortunately much too big to fit through the small tent opening. This was the subject of much merriment amongst our immediate neighbours!

I was now faced with an executive decision – take the tent down and move it close to the bike, then place the deflated airbed inside and pump it up again (a very public display of incompetence). Or, let some air out of the bed and fold it over enough to get it inside the tent. This second option was my choice – more circumspect and also quicker. The only downside was the bed was only half full.

Cowes for dinner

Having successfully (finally) established our campsite we decided to head for Cowes and hunt for a place to eat dinner. The main street of Cowes had been blocked off for exclusive use by bikes, so we had no trouble parking. It also gave us an opportunity to check out other bikes and meet new friends as well as look at highlights of the MotoGP season on the huge open-air screen.

Feeling Italian (after hearing the magic sound of the Ducatis in practise, we decided on the Isola Di Capri for dinner. This has to be one of the best Italian restaurants in Australia – brilliant atmosphere with lots of MotoGP memorabilia and pizzas to die for. We were happy to wait 10 minutes for a table, but you could also order takeout and sit outside on the street as many others had done. And afterwards we enjoyed some amazing ice-creams from their gelateria.

Night moves

Returning to camp, we decided on an





Above: Spectacular backdrop! Below: Start Delayed.



Above: Pedrosa in Practise. Below: Robbo is tipping Rossi!



early night. The only problem was there were two people, an airbed that took up the whole tent and a plethora of leather gear (no, not that kind!) as well as riding boots. Eventually we managed to squeeze in, but we shouldn't have bothered. You see, even though there were hundreds of tents – none of them seemed designated as sleeping quarters. Rather they were night clubs of varying descriptions which apparently had all night licenses!

Apart from the entertainment put on by organisers, there was also:

- Balloon races – rubbish bags filled with rubbish and helium; set alight and then launched over the camp-ground. While there were no casualties – last year a tree and a couple of tents were lost!
- Chariot rides – plastic barriers (sectioning off the kart track) attached to motorcycles and dragged down said track, often with brave riders mounted on them.
- And, last but not least, burnout competitions.

I suppose it was a good thing there was so much quality

entertainment – I hate to think what might have happened if people got bored!

Cranbourne Run

We eventually managed a few hours sleep and woke up ready to head to Cranbourne for the annual Run. It seemed like every bike in Victoria was there – from small scooters to custom Harleys. Riding back to the Island with hundreds of other bikes was a real joy and a great way to start the weekend.

Feel the noise

Back in time to catch a MotoGP practise session, I was totally unprepared for the noise. Securing a possie next to the fence, the roar from the bikes as they flashed past was unbelievable (particularly the Ducatis). The sound was comparable to the





A Moto Guzzi welcome to the Expo.

sonic boom of the fighter jets that flew over on Sunday. Compare that sound to the sound of an angry swarm of bees when the 250s had their turn!

Expo

The expo was worth a few visits to absorb all that was going on. As well as loads of gear on sale (the pillion scored a new pair of sunglasses and a pair of Draggin jeans) there were also a number of new bikes on display – including the world launch of Honda's 2007 CBR600RR!

Cruiser fans could check out Yamaha's new Roadliner and GS fans could see BMW's R1200GS Adventure fresh from the Cape York Safari and still sporting the red dust to prove it.

The race

You wouldn't believe it – fine weather all weekend, but 15 minutes before the start of the MotoGP, light rain was falling. The bikes came out for their warm-up lap only to return to the pits. The race was delayed while tyres were hastily changed, but soon after, the rain stopped which meant the race turned out to be a race against time to see whose tyres would hold out the longest!

Evacuation

Having packed up in the morning, we raced to the bike soon after the chequered flag. I expected to be stuck in traffic for hours trying to get off the Island, but the Victorian Police managed the flow with great precision and we were well on the way to Bairnsdale within half an hour.

The only dampener (apart from the rain that started falling later on) was a police roadblock on the highway about 100Ks from the Island which was pulling bikes over and letting cars through!

The verdict? You have to experience the MotoGP at least once, even if you're not a fanatic. If we go again next year, we'll be armed with a bigger tent, be prepared to stay up late, and spend another day on the journey and one less at the track.



Clockwise from right:

1. You'll need a big chequebook for this Ducati.
2. The Screaming Eagle dragster.
3. The Pillion thinks this Buell is the perfect Girl's bike!
4. My favourite – Yamaha's ultimate cruiser.
5. BMW's F800s – 2007 will be the year of the 800cc machine.
6. A dust covered R1200GS Adventure.
7. Suzuki's GSXR speed machine.
8. Honda CBR600RR unveiled to the world.





I love the bike, but... Many riders have bought the bike they really wanted only to find, well, it's not quite right. They don't really want to make a fully-fledged streetfighter or café racer out of it, but they do want to tweak it a bit.

Take the case of Stew with his XJR1300: 'The stock bike has a classic look I like, but the riding position is quite upright which means you cop a fair amount of wind'. Stew also wanted to give it a more edgy look without breaking the bank.

Where to start?

The best place to look is on the web. Check out the riders forums and find sites dedicated to owners of your bike. Chances are that someone has already tackled the same project you have in mind. For the XJR check out: www.yamaha-xjr-ownersclub.co.uk, or www.yamahaxjroc.com.

Next look for local suppliers and mechanics specialising in customising bikes. Stew went to www.austreetfighter.com.au for the flat bar, risers and bar-ends he needed to give him a more forward-leaning riding position. And for the "edgy" look he went to ebay and bought the cool twin headlights. For the cost of a few hundred dollars the XJR looks better and is more comfortable to ride.

Stew's now thinking about smaller indicators and maybe

some work on the exhaust system to gain a few extra horses.

We'll keep you updated.

What's Your Story?

We would love to hear from you. If you've made a few inexpensive mods that have made a big difference to your enjoyment of your bike – let us know.

Email to: pdennett@mac.com.

QUICKFacts

Bar ends \$59

Flatbar \$75

Oil Cooler cover \$100

Risers \$129

Lights \$150

